

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /072 W

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R 031600Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6882

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, NU

SUBJECT: MAY DAY IN NICARAGUA

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA SPOKE TO A MASS RALLY IN MANAGUA ON MAY DAY EMPHASIZING GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS FOR WORKERS AND CAMPESINOS. NON OFFICIAL UNIONS MARKED THE OCCASION MORE CIRCUMSPECTLY.

1. OBSERVANCE OF LABOR DAY IN NICARAGUA WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY OFFICIALLY SPONSORED MASS RALLY IN FRONT OF HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL IN MANAGUA. HOWEVER, DESPITE CONCERTED EFFORT BY GON TO GET PEOPLE OUT FOR THIS MEETING--FREE TRANSPORTATION, OBLIGATORY ATTENDANCE FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, ETC.--CROWD FELL MUCH BELOW ANTICIPATED 100,000 WITH PERHPAS A THIRD OF THAT SHOWING UP. AFTER GREAT EFFORT WHICH WENT INTO STAGING EVENT, 45-MINUTE CEREMONY NEARLY SEEMED PERFUNCTORY.

2. PRECEDED BY RELATIVELY SHORT SPEECHES FROM CAMPESINO AND CONSTRUCTION WORKER REPRESENTATIVES, PRESIDENT SOMOZA SPOKE FOR

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25 MINUTES. SOMOZA REPEATED REFRAINS OF LAST YEAR'S MAY DAY

SPEECH EMPHASIZING ADVANTAGES FOR WORKERS UNDER NICARAGUA'S DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WHERE WORKER AND MANAGEMENT CAN FREELY DIALOG AND UNIONS FREELY ORGANIZE AS OPPOSED TO REPRESSIVE COMMUNIST SYSTEM, AND LAUDING EXISTING LABOR LEGISLATION AS MOST ADVANCED IN HEMISPHERE. HOWEVER, MOST OF THE SPEECH WAS SPENT DISCUSSING OTHER: THE NATIONAL GUARD ("THEY ARE WORKERS, TOO"), PRIVATE ENTERPRISE ("WHO GRACIOUSLY DONATED THEIR BUSES AND TRUCKS TO BRING PEOPLE HERE") AND ESPECIALLY CAMPESINOS. HE ANNOUNCED REFORM TO LABOR CODE OBLIGATING LANDOWNERS TO PROVIDE SCHOOLS FOR CAMPESINO CHILDREN, AND MENTIONED COMMODITY INSTITUTE INCEI'S DRAMATIC INCREASE IN GRAIN SALES. SOMOZA ALSO DWELT ON NEW CAMPESINO DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (INVIERNO), LEGISLATION FOR WHICH CLEARED CONGRESS LAST WEEK, CALLING IT "MOST PROGRESSIVE INSTITUTE EXISTING IN ANY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY." WHILE RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR BETTER HOUSING FOR BOTH WORKERS AND CAMPESINOS, HE WARNED AGAINST EXPECTING THE GOVERNMENT TO DO EVERYTHING AND ADMONISHED THEM TO BE THRIFTY AND SAVE TO BUY HOUSES. ON HEALTH, HE REVIEWED CAMPAIGN PLEDGE TO PARTIALLY EXTEND SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM TO RURAL AREAS, AND EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT ESTABLISHING NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL CAMPUS IN LEON "DESPITE STUDENT DISCONTENT."

3. SOMOZA WAS GIVEN ROUSING EIGHT-SECOND STANDING OVATION WHEN INTRODUCED AND WHEN HE TERMINATED. STRONGEST APPLAUSE DURING SPEECH CAME AT MENTION OF HIS FATHER'S NAME. HIS PRAISE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ALSO DREW SIGNIFICANT APPLAUSE, ESPECIALLY BY THOSE CLOSEST TO THE SPEAKER'S PLATFORM. FOR SOME REASON SOMOZA FAILED TO MENTION THE NEWLY INCREASED MINIMUM WAGE SCALE (MANAGUA 1642) WHICH MOST THOUGHT WOULD HAVE BEEN A SURE CROWD PLEASER. SECURITY WAS HEAVY FOR SOMOZA'S APPEARANCE--HIS FIRST BEFORE A MASSIVE AUDIENCE IN OVER SIX MONTHS AND HE USED HIS CUSTOMARY BULLET-PROOF SPEAKER'S STAND.

4. OTHER LABOR GROUPS CELEBRATED MAY 1 ON MUCH LOWER KEY. ORIT AFFILIATED UNIONS SIMPLY ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE, AND PORTIONS OF THAT CRITICAL OF THE PRESENT LABOR SITUATION WERE CENSORED WHEN IT WAS AIRED OVER THE RADIO. GETTING AROUND MARTIAL LAW RESTRICTIONS ON MASS MEETINGS, COMMUNIST AND SOCIAL CHRISTIAN UNIONS HELD SMALL JOINT CEREMONIES AT FOUR DIFFERENT SITES IN MANAGUA. COMMUNIST CONFEDERATION CGT-I ALSO SPONSORED GATHERING IN MOVIE THEATRE IN LEON.

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5. SOMOZA'S PRINCIPAL ANTAGONIST, PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO OF LA PRENSA, TOOK ADVANTAGE OF MAY DAY TO SCORE A DIRECT HIT ON THE REGIME'S CENSORSHIP PRACTICES. CHAMORRO SENT THE CENSOR A PROPOSED COPY FO LA PRENSA CONTAINING A SERIES OF UNATTTRIBUTED STATEMENTS ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF LABOR IN NICARAGUA. WHEN THE STATEMENTS WERE EXCLUDED BY THE CENSORS AS EXPECTED, CHAMORRO SHUT HIS MOUSETRAP AND CIRCULATED A LETTER ALONG WITH A PHOTOSTATIC

COPY OF THE MARKE-UP OFFENDING PAGE IN WHICH HE REVEALED
CHORTLINGLY THAT THE STATEMENTS WERE THOSE OF PRESIDENT LUIS
SOMOZA MADE AT A MAY DAY RALLY A DOZEN YEARS BEFORE.
SHELTON

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